Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

LIBRARY
DEC 9 1931
U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, December 11, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Choosing The Right Toy." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: Copy of this Chat and "Food For Children."

—oOo—

Everybody makes mistakes now and then--even Santa Claus. Sometimes Santa Claus puts the wrong toy in the Christmas stocking.

Last year, for example, a two-year-old boy in our neighborhood was given an electric train for Christmas. Yes, on Christmas morning under the tree was a beautiful train as complete as mechanics could make it with all accessories--station, switches, tunnel, and side tracks. Though the train was for small Junior, when I dropped in to make a few minute's visit, it was Junior's father who was exhibiting enthusiasm over the toy rather than Junior. He was turning the electric current on and off and switching the toy train back and forth. His son was expected to sit back and passively watch the performance his father was putting on for his enjoyment. But because he was a lively, bright baby, he wasn't content to sit by and watch. He wanted to catch the train as it whirled past him.

"No, no," warned his father. "Sit still and let Daddy make it go."

When he crawled over and pulled the train off the track, his father spoke sharply. And Junior, being a sensible baby, there and then decided that the new toy was no fun for him and that he would go and look for a more interesting plaything that he could do something with. Much to his father's disappointment he showed much more pleasure in pulling the string and colored paper out of the waste basket than in watching his fine new toy.

What was the trouble? Santa Claus must have made a mistake. This Christmas it was far more suitable for Junior's father than for him. Junior needed something to play with that was adapted to his age, his interest and his ability.

For constructive activity and skill in handling objects there is the sandbox equipped with iron spoons, tin molds with no sharp edges, pails, shovels, and so forth. Blocks are some of the favorite playthings of childhood because they offer so many possibilities for building. Large, substantial wooden blocks, hollow to make them light in weight and of different sizes, give children an opportunity to experience size relationships and acquire manipulative skill. A nest of boxes of different sizes and colors has great possibilities, first learning to fit the boxes into each other and later for building with them. Boxes and blocks also encourage dramatic and creative ability, since they lead the child from constructing to social and dramatic play.

That fascinating game of playing house, which all children enjoy and which is unconsciously their means of learning how to behave like the people around them and carry on the activities that they see going on in the world, may develop from the house they build of boxes and blocks.

With large colored crayons and paint the child learns manipulation first. Mere scribbles are the result. He may enjoy the process simply for movement or color until his scribbles suggest a design to him of some familiar object. Then he begins artistic expression. An easel, which may be also a blackboard, on which are fastened sheets of unprinted newspaper to mark or paint on are convenient for these early artistic efforts. Scissors, in the same way, invite only handling at first. But when success is attained in their use, creative attempts soon follow. Modeling clay and calcium water color paints also make good gifts of the same variety.

Dolls and doll furniture--and they are enjoyed by both boys and girls of preschool age--bring about happy dramatic play. A truck or a wagon, for example, first interests its young owner as something to pull and handle. When he has learned to handle it with real success, he adds a block to the truck and becomes an iceman delivering ice at the door, with all the initiative and dramatic activity of the real situation.

Some toys are so poorly made that they go to pieces and cause disappointment and a feeling that every toy is temporary and can soon be thrown away for something new. All small children will naturally give their possessions hard usage, so they should be built to stand up under wear and tear. Bright, clear colors give the child more pleasure in a toy than dull ones. Have you ever noticed, too, that the child naturally prefers the toy of simple line and color in preference to the elaborate one? Speaking of color, be sure that it is as fast as possible and not poisonous. Washable toys are preferable and more hygienic than woolly ones or any that can't be cleaned. Watch, too, that there are no dangerous sharp edges on toys or any pieces that will easily break off and be harmful.

The best selection of toys are those that encourage well-rounded development. That means good toys of different kinds. But here's a suggestion from the psychologists: Too few toys, especially if they are all of one kind, limit a child's experiences and may lead to undesirable behavior as the result of unsatisfied interests. Too many, on the other hand, may overstimulate him and develop disorderliness, whims or worthless activity.

How to make the right nursery selection? First, provide some toys for physical activity -- vehicular toys like wagons and kiddy kars, trucks, tricycles, doll carriages, sleds and wheelbarrows as well as throwing toys like large rubber balls or bean bags. Among the outdoor toys are climbing apparatus -- ladders, see-saws, jungle-gyms, open boxes, slides and swings which not only stimulate vigorous physical play but develop muscles, and poise.

It often happens that children neglect toys purchased for them and prefer some discarded kitchen spoon, empty cracker box, or worn-out saucepan. Why?

Because the toys were selected on the basis of what appeals to grown-ups rather than on what children needed.

Play, as most of us know today, is serious business for the child. It is his occupation -- his job for the time being. It's the way he educates himself, prepares for life. If he is supplied with the right toys to encourage different interests and stimulate different activities, his opportunities for successful development are much greater.

Electric toys have an important place in the education of <u>older</u> children, but for the two-year-old they are valueless. Young children need playthings that provide them with something to do. Different kinds of good toys aid children in different ways. Some provide for quiet play indoors, some for vigorous active play outdoors; some help him to dramatize life as he sees it going on about him. Others provide sharing possibilities and promote social play that teaches him how to get on with his fellows. But all good toys should possess as much as possible of that "do-with" quality that leads children to experiment, use their hands, think, plan and work out ideas.

Let's stop and consider, for a moment, what toys are wrong for the child -- and why. And then let's consider the right toys -- and why.

The cost of a plaything, its unusualness or many other qualities that appeal to grown-ups mean nothing to a youngster. The toy isn't worth much to him if there is little he can do or learn from it. The trouble with mechanical toys that wind up is that they do the same thing over and over again and the child soon wearies of watching them and discards them. A good toy allows the child to do one thing with it today and another tomorrow. In other words, it meets his growing demands upon it and provides for progressive use.

That's all about toys today. Just a pointer or two for Santa Claus.

The next time you have guests in for Sunday night supper, here's just the menu you've been looking for. You can serve the meal buffet style or not, as you please. Arranged in the kitchen on individual plates, is an easy way of serving it and an attractive one. Ready for the menu?

Chicken salad on crisp lettuce; Asparagus in patty shells; Sweet pickled peaches, pears or apples; Celery stuffed with cream cheese; Hot biscuits or small parkerhouse rolls; Potato chips; Tart jelly; Apricot or orange sherbet; and, Angel cake.

Shall I repeat that menu before I give you the recipe for asparagus in patty shells? All right. Chicken salad; Asparagus in patty shells; Sweet pickled peaches, or pears, or apples; Celery stuffed with cream cheese; Hot biscuits or small parkerhouse rolls; Potato chips; Tart jelly; Apricot or orange sherbet with Angel cake.

Now the recipe for asparagus in patty shells. Seven ingredients. Are you ready?

2 cups of cut asparagus
2 tablespoons of butter
2 tablespoons of flour
1/2 teaspoon of salt
1 cup of milk
1 egg yolk, and
Pastry.

Once more. (REPEAT).

At this time of year, since it is difficult to get fresh asparagus in many places, the tender canned asparagus may be used. Cut it into inch lengths and heat it. Then prepare a sauce of the butter, flour, milk and salt. Pour this sauce into the beaten egg yolk and add the hot asparagus, carefully drained. Serve in pastry shells made by baking the pastry dough on the outside of muffin tins.

Monday: "Simple Holiday Sweets."

###